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SYSTEM FOR ENHANCING NETWORKED ELECTRONICALLY MONITORED GAME MACHINES
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- (57) Claim

1. A system comprising means to monitor the extent of play by an individual on one or more electronically monitored game machines during a discreet time interval and to allocate a point score to each individual related to the extent of play so monitored; a display adjacent each game machine to advise each individual of his or her point score for the time being; a bid button dedicated to each machine and adapted to facilitate allocation of part or all of an individual player's point score towards the playing of a supplementary game; visual and/or audio means accessible by two or more individuals playing separate game machines and adapted to facilitate playing of a supplementary game utilizing the points allocated thereto by bid buttons.

SYSTEM FOR ENHANCING NETWORKED ELECTRONICALLY MONITORED GAME MACHINES

The present invention has particular application to casinos where a large number of game machines such as poker machines, slot machines, fruit machines, keno terminals and the like can be monitored by a central remote computer.

The central remote computer may monitor the extent of usage of each machine and furthermore, if a card reader is associated with each machine, may monitor the extent and nature of machine useage by any one cardholder. Such monitoring however does not enhance the enjoyment of the game playing by any particular individual.

It is accordingly an object of the present invention to add a further dimension to the games which may be played on individual game machines by the provision of a system which will facilitate the playing of a further game or games dependent upon an individual's playing of individual game machines and involving competition with individuals simultaneously playing on similar game machines.

According to the present invention there is provided a system comprising means to monitor the extent of play by an individual on one or more electronically

monitored game machines during a discreet time interval and to allocate a point score to each individual related to the extent of play so monitored; a display adjacent each game machine to advise each individual of his or her point score for the time being; a bid button dedicated to each machine and adapted to facilitate allocation of part or all of an individual player's point score towards the playing of a supplementary game; visual and/or audio means accessible by two or more individuals playing separate game machines and adapted to facilitate playing of a supplementary game utilizing points allocated thereto by the bid buttons.

One example of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying diagram being a schematic representation of one possible system in accordance with the present invention.

According to the diagram of figure I there are three poker machines 1, 2 and 3 each having a supplementary module 4. The supplementary module includes a liquid crystal display 5 a card reader 6 and a bid button 7.

The poker machines are linked by communication channels 8 to a host computer 9. Each poker machine is additionally provided with a "coin in" counter which is adapted to be read locally by the intelligence in

supplementary module 4 and also monitored remotely by computer 9 via communication channel 8. Card reader 6 may additionally be utilised by the player and if a card holding player has inserted a card in card reader 6 then this additional user information is also accessible by the host computer via communication channels 8.

Host computer 9 loads the supplementary module 4 with the rules for a game. Supplementary module 4 then allocates points to the player according to the rules of the game. These points may be in proportion to the coinage passed through the poker machine. The points awarded by supplementary module 4 may be displayed on liquid crystal screen 5 in order that the user may be aware of their points tally at any particular time.

Point scores may be intermittently downloaded to computer 9 for each player and be displayed on remote sign 10 or alternatively remote sign 10 may be utilised only to display the points tally of the leading player on each of the three machines in order that the players of the two other machines may be appraised of the gap between their points and that of the leader.

Supplementary module 4 is provided with audio speaker 11 to facilitate the running of a supplementary game

apart from the games being played on poker machines 1, 2 and 3. The game may for example be an auction of a case of wine or other desirable object. In order to participate in the auction the players of machines 1, 2 or 3 may utilise their accumulated points by pushing one of the three bid buttons 7. If an auction was being broadcast over loudspeaker 11 and for example the player on machine number 1 wished to respond to the auctioneer's call of "Do I hear ten points" then he would press one of his bid buttons 7. The system could be configured such that host computer 9 would not take notice of any bids from machines not having adequate accumulated points for the bid at hand. Once the prize had been won then the auctioneer via computer 9 could deduct points appropriate for the winning bid from the points total for the player concerned.

It should be appreciated that sign 10 may be utilised to display other messages or characters other than the leader's total of accumulated points for the time being. It should also be appreciated that it is not necessary for a cardholding player to keep playing one machine in order to continue accumulating points during any particular session. Once a cardholder signed off a machine then his points total would remain constant until such time as he inserted his card in another machine and commenced playing another machine whereupon

computer 9 would recognise that the same cardholder was involved and would commence crediting points from the new machine being played towards the cardholder's existing total.

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Other games apart from auctions could be played utilising a system configured as abovementioned. Usage of a system as abovementioned not only enhances the user's excitement by offering a supplementary game apart from the game being played on the primary machine whereas the system furthermore encourages continuing usage of a variety of machines within the one establishment in order that points may be accumulated for use in relation to supplementary games.

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The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A system comprising means to monitor the extent of play by an individual on one or more electronically monitored game machines during a discreet time interval and to allocate a point score to each individual related to the extent of play so monitored; a display adjacent each game machine to advise each individual of his or her point score for the time being; a bid button dedicated to each machine and adapted to facilitate allocation of part or all of an individual player's point score towards the playing of a supplementary game; visual and/or audio means accessible by two or more individuals playing separate game machines and adapted to facilitate playing of a supplementary game utilizing the points allocated thereto by bid buttons.
2. A system in accordance with claim 1 wherein audio and visual means accessible by two or more individuals playing separate game machines are provided with a visual display having alpha numeric display capabilities such display being under control of a host computer.

3. A system in accordance with claim 2 hereof wherein the visual display means is capable of displaying a prize to be won by auction together with the top bid or bids received by the host computer for the time being from individual game machines.

4. A system in accordance with claim 3 hereof wherein the host computer is configured so as to ignore bids received from individual machines which do not surpass the pre-existing highest bid displayed on the visual display means.

5. A system in accordance with claim 4 wherein the host computer is configured so as to display the highest bid together with the identity of the highest bidder.

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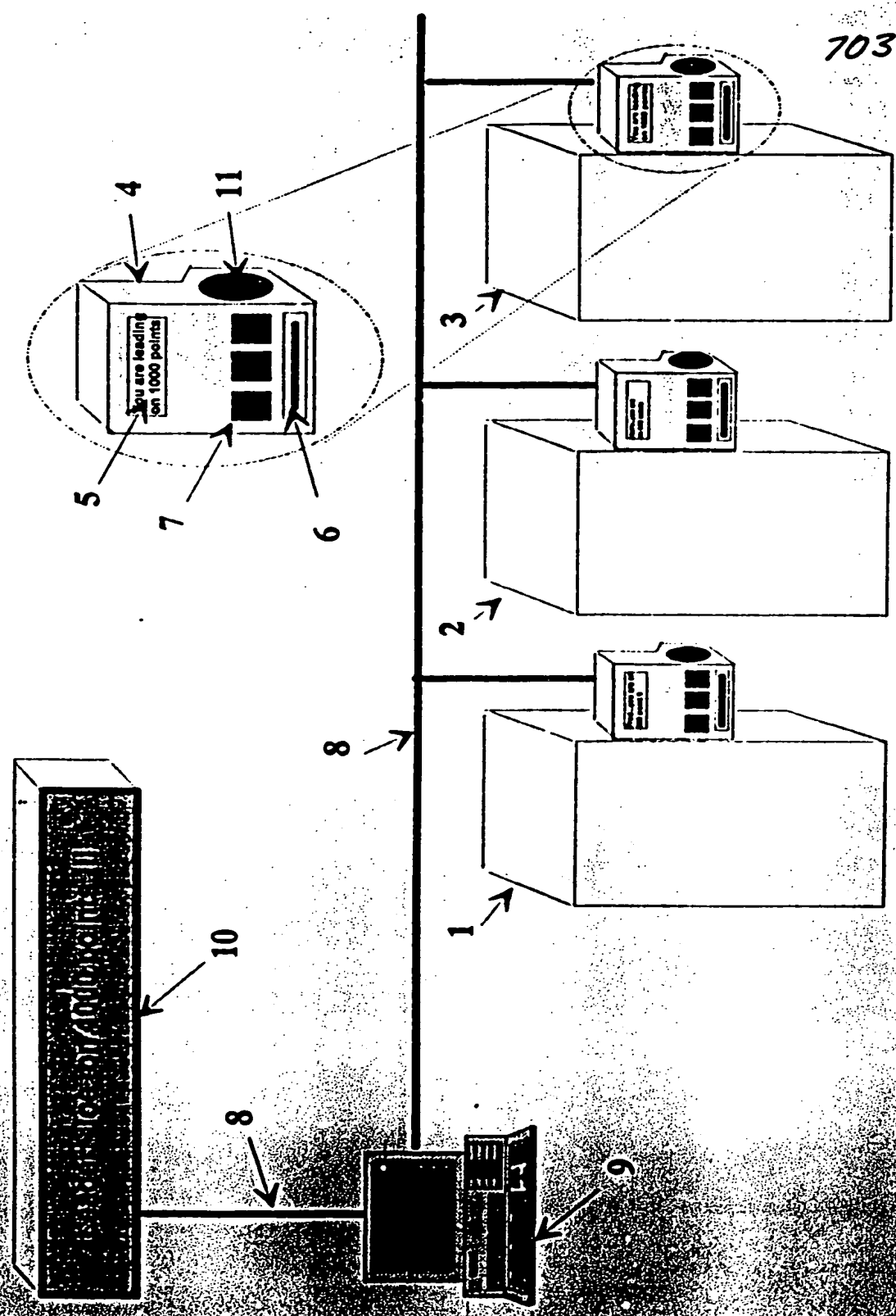


Figure 1